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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 003617

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SUBJECT: A/S BOUCHER CONSULTS WITH TURKEY ON CENTRAL ASIA
AND AFGHANISTAN

REF: ANKARA 3371

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: As follow-up to Secretary Rice's April commitment to FM Abdullah Gul to embark on expert consultations as part of new U.S.-Turkey strategic dialogue, Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher consulted with Turkish Officials on June 14 on Central Asia and Afghanistan. Turkish and U.S. officials noted they shared a vision for commitment to regional cooperation and integration, democratization, education, and counter-narcotics. Turkish officials admitted that they faced similar (to the U.S.) challenges in dealing with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Turkey is making a substantial contribution to reconstruction and security in Afghanistan. End Summary.

Consultations for Strategic Dialogue

¶2. (C) On June 14 A/S Richard Boucher, DAS John Gastright, Ambassadors Jacobson (Ashgabat), Hoagland (Dushanbe), and Ordway (Almaty), and SCA Special Assistant Hayden, accompanied by Ambassador Wilson and Embassy Ankara staff, met a team of Turkish officials led by Deputy U/S Ahmet Uzumcu for consultations on Central Asia and Afghanistan. At the end of the consultations, the U.S. delegation also met with Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to brief him on this first concrete outcome of the Secretary's and his commitment to commence expert consultations under a new strategic bilateral dialogue.

¶3. (C) A/S Boucher opened the discussions by stressing our shared vision of supporting democracy and prosperity in Central Asia. Recognizing strong ties with Turkey, historical linkages to Russia, and opportunities with China, Boucher called for countries in the region to maintain diverse and non-exclusive options, rather than a sole focus on east-west connections. He said that education was the foundation for economic development and democratization. Describing the region as &two pillars (Kazakhstan and India) and a pivot (Afghanistan)&8, Boucher stressed that success in Afghanistan was dependent on integration both north and south.

14. (C) Noting his participation the day before in the Central Asia Power Forum in Istanbul, Boucher stated that the discussions on energy linkages had moved beyond &lines on the map8 to specific transmission lines and tariff and customer arrangements. As a sign of commercial momentum, he cited the agreement signed with AES for a feasibility study for power projects in Tajikistan which could contribute to export of excess power from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan south to Afghanistan and South Asia. Noting that road and trade linkages were under-developed, Boucher cited activities of the Asian Development Bank as important. Ambassador Ordway mentioned trans-Asia road and rail projects in Kazakhstan, emphasizing the need for greater attention to customs and the &software8 of trade, as well as the "hardware".

15. (C) In response to a question from Dep U/S Uzumcu, Boucher affirmed that the north-south regional focus did not put in question continued U.S. support for the east-west energy corridor; rather, it was about leveraging diverse options to build countries, sovereignty and independence. Both sides cited completion of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and progress on Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline as tremendous accomplishments and highly symbolic of the continued commitment to east-west transit. Boucher cited the example of Kazakhstan renegotiating its gas contract with Gazprom as a small victory for empowerment based on having options.

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16. (C) Citing questions about Turkmenistan,s capacity and willingness to be a connection for a prospective trans-Caspian pipeline for gas, Boucher saw Kazakhstan as holding much higher near-term potential for a pipeline, as well as a separate oil linkage to Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan. He stated that the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) would soon announce funding for a feasibility study for a pipeline across the Caspian for gas from Kazakhstan. Both sides agreed that realizing a trans-Caspian pipeline would require strong support from the U.S. and Turkey. Ambassador Jacobson noted that Turkmenistan might be able to link later into a Kazakhstan pipeline. She said that Turkmenistan to date was unwilling to be open about its reserves and was susceptible to pressure from Gazprom.

17. (C) Turkish Energy Coordinator Mithat Balkan stated that there was a convergence of U.S. and Turkish regional energy policy. He worried, however, that there might still be confusion about north-south linkages competing with or diverting from the east-west energy corridor. Balkan called for clear support from the U.S. for the East-West corridor (also plugging high level U.S. support at the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan inaugural on July 12-13). Balkan emphasized that Russia was putting pressure on all countries, including Turkey, to fill pipelines with Russian gas, thereby excluding Caspian gas. Ambassador Ordway pointed out that Russian leverage was reduced because its developable reserves were dwindling; Balkan insisted that this made Russian pressure more &desperate8.

Central Asia

18. (C) Director General Resit Uman emphasized the overlap of U.S. and Turkish policies in the region. He said that Turkey fully supported integration and cooperation and promoting political and economic reform. Uman cited Turkey,s historical and special ties to the region. He emphasized that each country had its specific characteristics, so a monolithic approach was impossible. Uman admitted that

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were difficult and autocratic, but noted that Turkish companies have still been very successful in both, especially in Turkmenistan. He also asserted that Turkey,s Central Asia policy had become more focused on democratization after 2003, consistent with its EU accession.

¶9. (C) Accepting Boucher,s point of the critical importance of education, Uman stated that Turkey,s schools had been important in the region, even those associated with &foundations8 which still provided a modern and high quality education sought out by the local elite (apparently a reference to Fethullah Gulen Islamic schools). Uman said that Turkey provided significant training and scholarships to the region. The Turkish side also cited activities of the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency TIKA (comparable to USAID) in the region.

¶10. (C) Boucher also stressed the need to focus regional efforts on information (as almost all media comes from Russia), technology, and media. He also noted that Turkey,s success on counter narcotics could be particularly relevant for Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Kazakhstan and OSCE

¶11. (C) In response to a question on Kazakhstan,s quest for OSCE Chairmanship in 2009, Boucher said that the chair had to meet the high standards of the organization. The question is how and when Kazakhstan would do that. The Secretary has not been able to certify Kazakhstan,s progress on human rights and democratic reform to our own Congress, so it is unlikely

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it will achieve the standards by 2009. Nevertheless, we are talking with Kazakhstan about this and have asked them to identify the steps they will take to reach acceptable human rights standards.

Afghanistan

¶12. (C) In both the meeting with Foreign Minister Gul and the general session, which included military (TGS) and intelligence (TNIO) officers, the Turkish representatives stressed the long and special relationship Turkey has with Afghanistan. Turkey has pledged \$100 million to Afghanistan,s reconstruction, twice led ISAF in Afghanistan, and has taken over joint command of Kabul Central Command. It will establish a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Wardak later this year. Gul said the Afghan leadership is making progress, but must start to do more on their own, noting the foreigners will not always be there.

¶13. (C) Boucher stated that the perception that the security situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating was not accurate. Rather, it was an inevitable consequence of the extension of the central government out to the borders, resulting in more conflict and &testing8 from criminals, warlords and the Taliban. He said that the Taliban, using money from narcotics, had adopted new tactics. Boucher also emphasized that expansion of government must mean the extension of good government. He cited recent replacement of police chiefs by better, albeit not perfect, personnel. Boucher argued against the local misperception on the ground that NATO was not as good as the Americans, asserting that there was no change in the U.S. commitment to success in Afghanistan.

¶14. (C) Deputy Director General Babur Hizlan voiced support for these objectives, but called for keeping the current levels of U.S. forces. He and the Coordinator for Afghanistan Koray Targay provided a long list of Turkish support and training in the sectors of health, education,

security, and infrastructure. They supported more investment in roads and rails, such as the Ring Road, China-to-Turkey, and Asia-Europe, as well as in the power sector.

¶15. (C) Boucher expressed appreciation for Turkey,s contributions. He noted that the U.S. was dedicating \$2-3 billion per year to security, anti-narcotics, governance, and reconstruction. Citing the importance of both primary and secondary road development (&good guys use roads8) for augmenting government services, he called for more international support for infrastructure. Boucher also supported increased literacy and vocational training, noting that Afghanistan had been one of the world,s poorest countries in the 50,s, 60,s, and 70,s and then went downhill for two decades.

¶16. (C) DAS Gastright echoed the observation that the Taliban and other resistance was disparate and not monolithic, consisting also of criminal elements that were reacting to expansion of government control. He cited Operations &Mountain Lion8 and &Mountain Thrust8 as successful for expanding government control in difficult areas in the east and south. Gastright emphasized that they needed to counter misinformation on government control. He also described efforts to increase roads and power infrastructure, as well as efforts to improve provincial governance and narcotics eradication, citing a fruit tree project as a successful program.

¶17. (U) This message was cleared by Assistant Secretary Boucher.

¶18. (U) Dushanbe Minimize Considered

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WILSON